

THAILAND : WHAT THE WORLD THINKS

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Countries have reputations. Just like people and brands and just about everything else we deal with in life there are different views of countries depending on who and when you ask. As we are about to start a new year, and we all hope to see a better year, it might be a good time to remind ourselves of the importance of regular checking of the narrative around any brand we care about.

Of course anyone reading this flash will care about Thailand. Whether you are a Thai or farang. And I am sure if we did a survey or a focus group or some in-depth discussion on what the narrative around the country is we would have a lot of debate and differences. But, hopefully, we would all agree that we are biased. We are a group of people who live inside Thailand and no matter how much time we spend outside travelling or how much we do to read and listen to foreigners opinion we are probably also a little biased. Maybe you are biased because you love the country too much, or you think the issues in the country are huge, or you just had a bad day.

But as a market researcher I can't afford bias. And so I tend to use tools that help me "see" the world in a neutral way.

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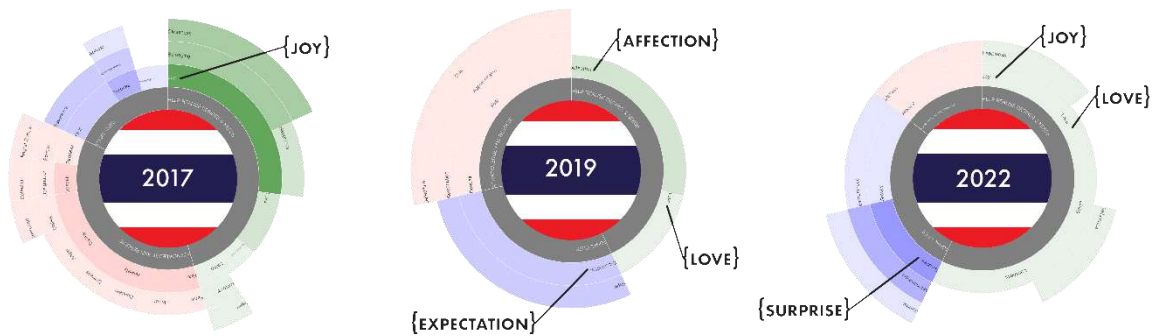
**THAILAND IS MOSTLY ABOUT
JOY AND LOVE AND SURPRISE**

That is not my opinion.
It is not a tourist board's tagline.
It is just what the world thinks.

Over the last six years I have regularly had a look at the reputation around Thailand and the emotions generated by the narrative around it. I work with a machine learning based platform called SignificanceSystems.

It works like this : I ask it to look at the narrative around Thailand. It looks at everything ever read on the internet that mentions Thailand. Yes everything. Terabytes worth of articles, website content, social media posts. It reads all of it and then tells us what the world thinks, using the total content of the internet as a proxy for humankinds knowledge. One of the actions it takes is to then measure all the emotions that are generated by all that content.

In the illustration below I have displayed the emotions generated by Thailand globally in late 2017, 2019 and this week, December 2022. The platform displays all the emotions generated with the green bars representing positive, red negative emotions and the blue/purples are emotional cues.



Note that the narrative around Thailand changes.

2017

The narrative globally around Thailand is one of joy. Yes, there are some weak negative emotions which were really about bad travel experiences by tourists and the difficulties some businesses had in efficient business here, and concerns about the government stability. Nothing too serious. And again the real story was that Thailand lived up to what the advertising promises to the world : and place and experience that mostly creates joy, belonging, closeness.

2019

Two years later and we see that strong reaction of joy was now more affection. The positive reactions were still there but toned down. We also saw that there was now a lot of expectation and hope. In tracking the narrative in those two years we had noted that compared to some of it's neighboring countries there was a feeling that Thailand was losing it's uniqueness. Shopping was good but not any better than Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam. The tourist attractions, food, experiences were still great but so were those of neighboring markets. The business world was seeing Thailand as a good market but again not growing, changing at the rate of others. And we noted more and more content worrying about the government, how business could be arranged, what and where growth would come from. Again at the end of 2019 what we see is a generally good vibe but more was expected than was maybe being delivered.

Then of course COVID times ! We tracked the countries narrative across the Covid years and of course saw that, like many countries, the narrative around the country was driven by how it was coping, what issues it had and how it would recover.

2022

And good news. Maybe hard to believe if you lived in Thailand the last three years but the world thought the country did quite well and is recovering. The joy is back. Maybe not as strong as five years ago but improving. More importantly there is a lot of surprise and astonishment. The content of the intent is indicating that the world sees a lot of opportunity in Thailand and expectations of more success, that the country will recover and that business in the country will do well. In other words a great story for anyone in Thailand from government or business to leverage. There are some negatives, anxiety, and a lot of that is about confusion about government regulations, visa applications, basically the rules. An area for clarity.

Thailand's narrative is in an OK place. Tracking the narrative of the country brand, like that of all brands, is about understanding what is working, what needs attention, and getting a neutral point of view. Hopefully in 2023 our tracking of the narrative around Thailand will show further improvement